

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10

L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00

ICAE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 /057 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9928

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5469

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI

SUBJECT: LEIGH STATEMENT POSTPONED

REF: SANTIAGO 5421

1. IT NOW APPEARS THAT JUNTA MEMBER GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH WILL NOT MAKE A REPLY TO THE JULY 19 COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' STATEMENT BEFORE JULY 24. EDITORIAL COMMENT JULY 21 REFLECTED THE INTENSE CHILEAN INTEREST IN THE APPARENT JUNTA CRISIS. "LA TERCERA" STATES THAT WHAT THE COUNTRY NEEDS MOST NOW IS NATIONAL UNITY AND THAT PATRIOTISM REQUIRES THAT THOSE HOLDING THE LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE POWERS MAKE "A SUPREME EFFORT AND SACRIFICE RIGID POSITIONS". THE EDITORIAL FORECASTS "DARK HOURS" FOR CHILE IF THERE IS CONTINUED DISSENSION, WITH HISTORY JUDGING THOSE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO IT. "EL MERCURIO" COMES DOWN ON BOTH LEIGH AND THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. TO "MERCURIO'S" WAY OF THINKING, LEIGHT'S REMARKS ARE CONTRARY TO A CHILEAN TRADITION OF NOT WASHING DIRTY POLITICAL LAUNDRY IN PUBLIC; THAT THEY WERE MADE TO A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT IS EVEN WORSE. ADDITIONALLY, THE MOMENT WAS NOT THE MOST OPPORTUNE (PRESUMABLY A REFERENCE TO THE LETELIER CASE). ON THE OTHER HAND, THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' STATEMENT IS "UNUSUAL" (INSOLITA) AND WOULD

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NOT HAVE HAPPENED IN A "FORMALIZED PRESIDENTIAL REGIME". THE PROBLEM IS POLITICAL, SAYS THE EDITORIAL, AND AS SUCH MUST BE TREATED WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT AND IT MUST BE RESOLVED. THE UNITY AND DISCIPLINE OF THE ARMED FORCES IS NOT AT STAKE. REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME, THE RESPECT AND GRATITUDE DESERVED BY LEIGH AND THE AIR FORCE IS NOT DIMINISHED. (COMMENT: MORE THAN SIDING WITH THE

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, "MERCURIO" APPEARS TO BE CRITICIZING LEIGH AND BIDDING A SUBTLE FAREWELL IN THE FINAL SENTENCE OF THE EDITORIAL. "LA TERCERA", ON THE OTHER HAND, SEEMS TO BE PULLING FOR SOME FACE-SAVING RECONCILIATION).

2. WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY A PDC SOURCE THAT THE PARTY WILL ARRANGE FOR A LETTER OF SUPPORT TO GO TO LEIGH NEXT WEEK. IT WILL BE SIGNED BY AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF "NOT PDC-IDENTIFIED" CHILEANS, AND WILL TELL LEIGH THAT HIS VIEWS, AS EXPRESSED IN THE JULY 19 RADIO INTERVIEW, AND REPRINTED IN THE JULY 20 "EL DR CURIO" (SEE REFTEL), ARE IN ACCORD WITH THE WILL OF A MAJORITY OF CHILEANS. PRESUMABLY THE LETTER WILL FIND ITS WAY QUICKLY TO THE MEDIA.
LANDAU

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